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Staff Memo 25-72

Secret

OFFICE OF
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

MEMORANDUM

Implications of Madagascar's Unfinished Revolution

Secret
27 July 1972

Copy No.

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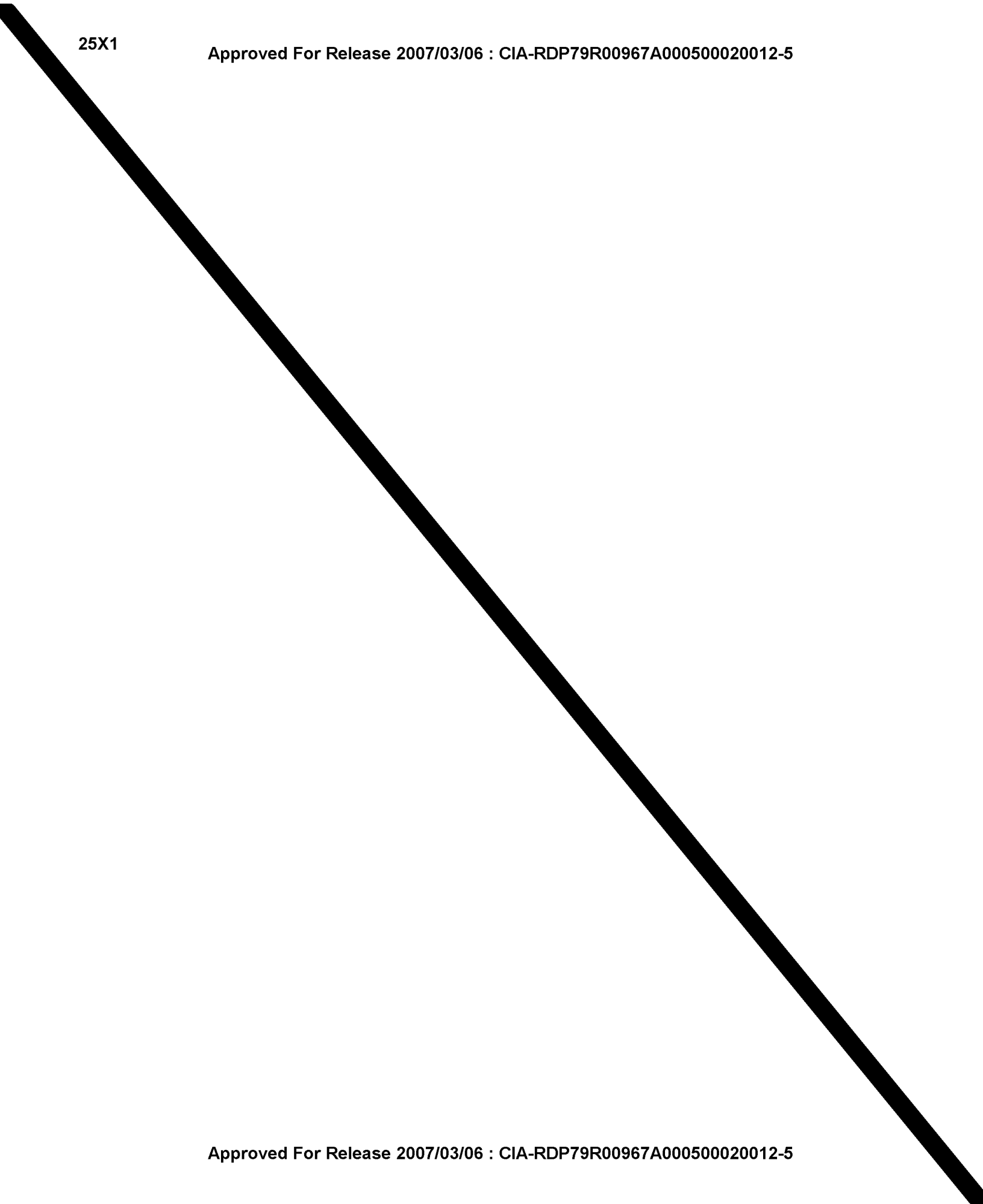

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S-E-C-R-E-T

26 July 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. John Huizenga

25X1 [redacted]

SUBJECT: Suggested additional customers for Memorandum, Implications of Madagascar's Unfinished Revolution

Subject to your approval, we would like the following to receive the Memorandum:

The Pentagon

101 Miss Nancy Mitchell (ACSI)
Room 2C 484

102 Mr. James Rigas (ONI)
Room 5C 636

103 Mr. Everett Burlando (AFNIE)
Room 4A 670

25X1 [redacted] (DIA/Estimates)

104 Room 1014A
Pomponio Plaza

25X1 [redacted] (DIA/Estimates)

Room 1006
Pomponio Plaza

105 Mr. George Bader (ISA)
Room 4E 880 Pentagon

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S-E-C-R-E-T

The White House

106 Mr. Fernando Rondon
Room 302
Old Exec. Off. Bldg.

107 Mr. William G. Hyland
Room 381
Exec. Off. Bldg.

NSA

25X1

108 [redacted]

State Department

109 Mr. David Newsom
Asst. Secy. for African Affairs
Room 6236

110 Mr. Lloyd B. Rives
Director, INR/ORR/FAF
Room 7613

111 Mr. Samuel C. Adams, Jr.
Assistant Administrator for Africa
Agency for International Development
Room 6936

112 Mr. Hugh Campbell
Chief, INF/RAA/CS
Room 7533

113 Mr. Merton Bland
INR/RAA/CS
Room 7533

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State Department (Continued)

114 Ms. Nancy Rawls
Director, AF/PPS
Room 5234

115 Mr. Herman J. Cohen
Director, AF/C
Room 4238

116 Mr. Ray S. Cline
Director, INR
Room 6531

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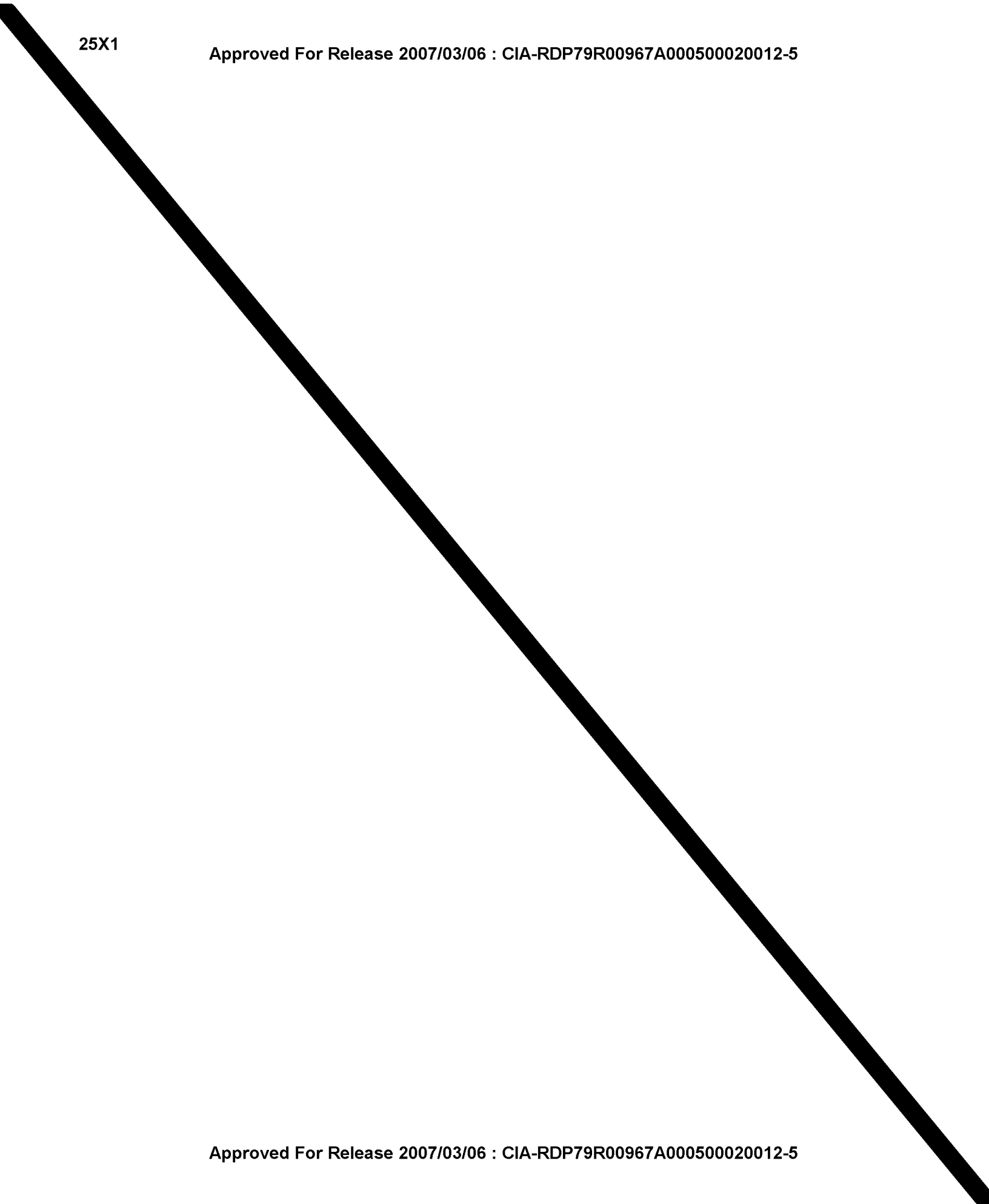

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Ray S. Cline
Director INR

Copies of the attached have been sent to Asst. Secy Newsom, Mr. Rives, Mr. Adams, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Bland, Mr. Cohen and Ms. Rawls.

[redacted]

JOHN HUIZENGA
Director
National Estimates

27 July 1972
(DATE)

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FORM NO. 1 AUG 54 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101 WHICH MAY BE USED. (47)

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

27 July 1972

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Implications of Madagascar's Unfinished Revolution 1/

NOTE

This office has seldom examined the problems of Madagascar.2/ Indeed, for almost a quarter of a century this island has seemed an exotic tropical paradise -- a sort of Francophone Brigadoon -- with few problems, a benign French presence and a pro-Western foreign policy. But last month Malagasy students and workers toppled the 12-year old administration of President Philibert Tsiranana. A temporary government dominated by military men has agreed -- apparently with some reluctance -- to administer the country's affairs until a new constitution is drafted and new elections held. This memo assesses recent developments, the prospects for a fundamental change in Malagasy policies, and the significance of such a shift for French and US interests.

* * * * * *

1/ *This memorandum was prepared in the Office of National Estimates and discussed with appropriate offices in CIA, which are in agreement with its principal judgments.*

2/ *Formally named the Malagasy Republic in 1960.*

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Stability under the Franco-Côtier Alliance (1947-1972)

1. Since 1895, when the French wrested control of Madagascar from the ruling Merina tribe, the island's local politics have been dominated by one issue: how to keep the Merina from again gaining political and economic ascendancy over the island's 17 other tribes.

2. This has not been easy. The Merina -- the People of the Plateau -- are the most numerous of the island's tribes (1 1/2 million of a total population of 7 million); they also are the most adaptive, energetic, aggressive, best-educated, and richest. The island's capital is situated in the heart of Merina tribal territory. Until 1947, the French drew heavily on the Merina to provide local administrators. As if all this were not enough to evoke the fear and undying hatred of the less-favored Côtiers (Coastal Peoples), the Merina are largely Protestant in a land where most are animists and Catholics, and they believe that their light-brown, Polynesian coloring proves their innate superiority over the darker-skinned Côtiers.

3. Following a bloody Merina-inspired insurrection against French rule in 1947 which cost some 80,000 lives, France began grooming

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members of the Côtier tribes to take over major administrative jobs from the Merina. These efforts intensified as independence approached. Philibert Tsiranana, a French-educated Côtier, was chosen head of state. His Malagasy Social Democratic Party (PSD), with close support from the French Socialist Party, swept Madagascar's first national election in June 1960. After independence France supplied some 1,500 permanent advisers to the government, and sponsored a 3,200-man Gendarmerie, made up of loyal Côtiers, to offset the army, whose officers and men are almost exclusively Merina veterans of the French army. The Côtiers, with French help, soon monopolized top government jobs and sopped up the sweet trickle of government patronage.

4. In return for French support, including budgetary subsidies, Tsiranana's Côtier government followed a slavishly pro-French foreign policy line, and allowed 30,000 Frenchmen to run the country's banks, industries, and sugar plantations. The Merina, though excluded from the upper ranks of the administration, were allowed to organize politically, and continued to enjoy access to higher education and jobs in the modern private sector. This arrangement did little to stimulate

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development in Madagascar's stagnant economy, but it maintained relative peace and political stability -- until 1972.[1/]

An End to Côtier Dominance (1972)

5. The decline and fall of the Tsiranana regime probably began with the President's third heart attack in 1970, after which he slipped into bizarre behavior patterns and spells of paranoia. In a country where politics have traditionally been conspiratorial, Tsiranana saw plots even where none existed. The "plots" were never elaborated for the public, nor did the government prosecute any of the accused.[2/] Obsessed with such concerns, Tsiranana instituted an increasingly authoritarian rule, devoting little time to the country's mounting social and economic problems. He nevertheless remained active in party affairs, and flagrantly manipulated national elections to win a third seven-year term as President in January 1972.

1/ *Until 1972 the only overt challenge to Tsiranana's rule was a short-lived, bloody uprising in a remote corner of the island by the Antandroy, one of Madagascar's most primitive tribes, in 1971.*

2/ *The last of these psycho-dramas was staged in 1971, when a competent and loyal Vice President, Resampa, was jailed and the removal of US Ambassador Marshall and five other Americans was requested, though no specific charges were levelled at anyone. In June 1972 Tsiranana admitted he had been gulled in this matter, and threatened to initiate yet another hunt: to find those who had falsely accused Resampa and the Americans.*

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6. Meanwhile, important elitist groups in the capital were beginning to air a variety of long-held grievances. University students, in particular, had for several years been demanding basic changes in the educational system. Many of their grievances are real enough: professors from the Metropole insist on taking long vacations, forcing students to cram for the all-important "Bac" exam in 7-8 months instead of the usual 10. The course content in the university is geared to the one student in five who is French. History and geography courses feature France and Europe, and the schools of law and the humanities greatly overshadow those of agriculture, medicine, and business. In addition to student unrest -- which Tsiranana dismissed as foreign-inspired, Maoist plots -- there was a growing impatience among the populace, and most noticeably in the capital, with the bumbling and capricious performance of the President.

7. The immediate cause of Tsiranana's downfall was a strike at Befeletana Medical School in the capital in January 1972. The demand was for standardized medical training -- i.e., upgrading Befeletana so that its degrees would have the same status as those

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conferred at Tananarive University's medical school. In late April, after the government attempted to suppress the strikers, all of Tananarive's university and secondary school students joined the strike in sympathy, quickly broadening their demands to include overhaul of the entire educational system.

8. Tsiranana refused to consider student demands. On May 13 a mass student demonstration led to the killing of 25 students by Tsiranana's special riot police. This event, together with Tsiranana's shrill threat on radio to "kill thousands more if necessary" brought out the capital's workers and civil servants on general strike. Rioting quickly spread to other cities. Neither the army, composed mainly of Merina, nor the Côtier-dominated Gendarmerie took active part in the fighting. Indeed, both groups showed open sympathy with the demonstrators.

9. By 15 May, when the President at last realized that some conciliatory gesture was needed to avoid civil war, it was too late. His removal of the unpopular Minister of Culture and his offer of immediate dialogue made no impression: the strikers demanded that Tsiranana resign, and that the army Chief of Staff, General Ramanantsoa, form a provisional government to rule until a national

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convention could adopt a new constitution and prepare for new elections. A few days later Ramanantsoa took over, leaving Tsiranana in place but stripping him of all but ceremonial duties.

10. Who brought the government down? On the surface it would appear to be a straightforward tribal matter: the Merina, who make up over 80 percent of students, workers, and civil servants, took advantage of widespread student grievances and the President's clumsy response to topple the Côtiers from power. But nothing in Madagascar is straightforward. Although the student and worker demonstrators were overwhelmingly Merina, the strikes and demonstrations were planned, organized, and staged without the participation -- or even the sanction -- of the established Merina political and labor organs. For example, Madagascar's major opposition party, the Communist-dominated AKFM (Congress Party for Malagasy Independence), is 90 percent Merina, and has long advocated a radical political program; yet it stayed aloof from the strike and opposed the demonstrations. The workers, including a heavy sprinkling of lawyers, teachers, unemployed youths, and civil servants, in addition to railwaymen and other trade unionists, by-passed the formal (and predominantly Merina) trade union structure, even forming their own executive committee in

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late May to decide future policies. At about the same time the students' and workers' strike organizations formed a loose association.

11. Almost nothing is known of the revolutionaries' leadership, organization, or goals. Undoubtedly some of their current leaders come from the radical student associations, both at home and in France, which over the years have spouted slogans expressing nationalist, anti-colonialist, anti-Tsiranana, and vaguely anti-French establishment sentiments. Few, if any, are linked with the old familiar labor unions or formal political opposition parties. Since Ramanantsoa took power, the students and workers have not come forward with a joint program, nor have any lists of demands been made known. Splinter groups of uncertain representation have variously called for educational overhaul, revision of the Franco-Malagasy accords, an end to French domination, expanded relations with Communist countries, and expulsion of Indian (sic) merchants. There also are hints that two separate radical programs -- the workers' more radical than the students' -- are being formulated.

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The Military Regime and Its Prospects

12. It would be hard to find a group of Malagasy with better credentials than the Ramanantsoa government for prudence, responsibility, and administrative competence. Five of the 11-member cabinet are military men, who have served with distinction in the French and Malagasy armed forces. Five are Merina, and the remaining six represent different Côtier tribes. The majority were educated in France, and none are known to be anti-French or anti-West. For what it is worth, when General Ramanantsoa was Chief of Staff, a portrait of Marshall Petain hung behind his desk.

13. In most respects the present government has acted like a caretaker regime, ruling without any clear program and without much sense of political direction, and approaching the country's problems with caution and moderation. To allay provincial fears of a Merina takeover, Ramanantsoa has retained the Côtier ex-President, Tsiranana, as a powerless figurehead. Ramanantsoa also named as military chief of each province a man native to that province.

14. Yet the Ramanantsoa regime has also taken some radical new departures, particularly in foreign affairs. It has renounced

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Tsiranana's policy of dialogue with South Africa and cancelled a major South-African aided development project. It has called for revising the Franco-Malagasy economic, military, and cultural accords, and has privately threatened to leave the Yaounde Convention, which associates Madagascar and other Francophone countries with the EEC. In mid-July the cabinet announced that it had reopened the question of establishing formal trade relations with the USSR -- a step which the former government had rejected in 1968 after negotiations had been almost completed. The current government's few domestic initiatives include abolishing unpopular cattle- and head-taxes, and raising the basic minimum wage by five percent.

15. In spite of their generally conservative inclinations, the new leaders thus seem to be moving to appease the radical student-worker coalition. This is understandable. The workers have made it clear that their general strike is suspended, not ended, to give Ramanantsoa time to "implement their demands". The students continue to meet in private "seminars" to decide on future courses of action, particularly at the scheduled constitutional convention. The strike organizations remain intact, and demonstrators could be put back in the streets on short notice.

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16. We do not know how far Ramanantsoa will choose to go, or be forced to go, to maintain the support of the non-establishment radicals -- the student-worker coalition. The students' and workers' demonstrated political clout is such that Ramanantsoa cannot ignore them. By keeping Tsiranana on in the face of loud cries for his dismissal, however, Ramanantsoa has shown that he can reject demands which seem to him to threaten national unity. Nor can we forsee the results of a constitutional convention. Clearly diverse tribal and regional interests would have to be accommodated for any new constitution to be acceptable. This would be, at best, a long and painful process with uncertain results. And there is always the possibility that Ramanantsoa's taste for power may grow with the eating, although there is no evidence of this yet.

17. Meanwhile, Ramanantsoa seems to be trying first of all to reduce political tensions so that a constitutional convention can take place in August, as scheduled. He released several important political leaders* from Tsiranana's jails so that they and their tribal constituents could take part in the political process now going on.

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* *Among them Resampa, general secretary of the majority Côtier party, the PSD (see footnote to paragraph 5); and Mona Jaona, leader of the 1971 uprising and head of the Monima party.*

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This is a gamble. It could lead to disorder, particularly in the far provinces, where political support is often won by evoking tribal fears and old enmities. But Ramanantsoa appears to have the support of Madagascar's armed forces, including the Côtier-loaded Gendarmerie as well as the Merina-dominated army, navy, and air force. Moreover, the government's new tougher line toward France and its slap at South Africa have broad appeal to the latent xenophobia among many Malagasy.

Implications for French and US Interests

18. We can conceive of various contingencies arising which could drive Malagasy politics rather abruptly either in a more radical -- i.e., anti-French and anti-West -- or a more conservative direction. But such developments seem unlikely. It is far more probable that the present Malagasy regime, or any likely successor, will adhere to a "prudence model" of international behavior -- i.e., that it will weigh the likely gains vs. the risks of a given policy and will refrain from rash or impulsive acts. This approach narrowly limits the range of anti-French policies which might be adopted. It virtually rules out a complete break with France, because educated Malagasy -- the people whose opinions should weigh most heavily on

governmental decisions -- are culturally French, and do not want to sever their close ties with the former Metropole.

19. The question then is not whether to break with France, but what sort of forms the relationship should take in the future. Every active political group, both within and outside traditional Malagasy politics, is calling for greater independence from France and revision of the incestuous 1960 Franco-Malagasy accords.* Revised terms have yet to be formulated. The new government already has demanded major changes in curriculum and a reduction in the number of French teachers -- measures which the French tried to persuade Tsiranana to accept more than a year ago. It is also likely that the Malagasy will ask a higher price -- probably increased development aid or more

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* *These accords, like those with most Francophone African countries, defined a broad range of post-independence relationships in military, economic, political, and cultural areas. France was given control over the naval and military base at Diego Suarez and an airbase at Ivatovo, near the capital. These rights were not formally extra-territorial: French and Malagasy form joint units, and use the base facilities jointly. France, in return, agreed to defend Madagascar against outside attack, and to provide training and equipment for Madagascar's own armed forces, which are under Malagasy command. Frenchmen enjoy dual citizenship in Madagascar and, until a few years ago, French goods were given preferred treatment on Malagasy markets. The accords also provided for French budgetary and development aid, technical and administrative assistance, and a decisive role in Malagasy secondary and higher education. Madagascar's exchange reserves and currency are effectively under French control.*

modern military hardware -- for French maintenance of its naval base. The base provides employment for the politically active dockworkers at Diego Suarez: hence the prudence model would rule out any attempt to force the French out.

20. Prudence also would make it unlikely that Ramanantsoa will carry out his threat to sever Madagascar's association with the Common Market. Loss of EEC trade preferences would cause a sharp drop in Malagasy exports, some two-fifths of which go to EEC countries, and would have serious economic and political consequences for Madagascar. It is probable that Madagascar will expand its trade ties with Communist countries, but these are not likely to cut deeply into traditional Malagasy trade patterns.

21. From the French viewpoint, it is hard to see how recent Malagasy developments, or any likely to occur there in the near future, could strengthen French influence or enhance French interests anywhere. Should the Malagasy win substantial concessions from France, other Francophone states -- several of which are already seeking revised accords with the ex-Metropole -- would be encouraged to raise their own demands. Similarly Madagascar's threat to pull out of the EEC

comes at a bad time for France, which is trying to keep the Francophone states in a bloc to strengthen the French hand in the forthcoming negotiations over Commonwealth accession to the EEC. Indeed, these concerns probably are more significant than the direct French economic stake in Madagascar, which is not large: direct investments worth between $65 and $85 million, and 15-20,000 Frenchmen employed in the modern sector -- primarily industry, banking, and commerce. And these interests do not seem seriously threatened, in any event.

22. The US stake is even smaller. Investments are negligible. The large NASA tracking station, which has come under criticism by extremist nationalist groups from time to time, will be less important as new facilities are completed on Diego Garcia, in the British Indian Ocean Territories. In a larger context, shifting political winds in Madagascar are relevant to US interests in the Indian Ocean area generally. To date Malagasy ports have not been of much importance to the US, and are seldom visited by US naval vessels. But the increasing strategic importance of the Indian Ocean, particularly for the growing flow of Middle East oil through its waters, could significantly enhance Madagascar's importance. There is nothing to suggest, however, that even a radical Malagasy regime would deny its ports to French or US vessels while opening them to the USSR.

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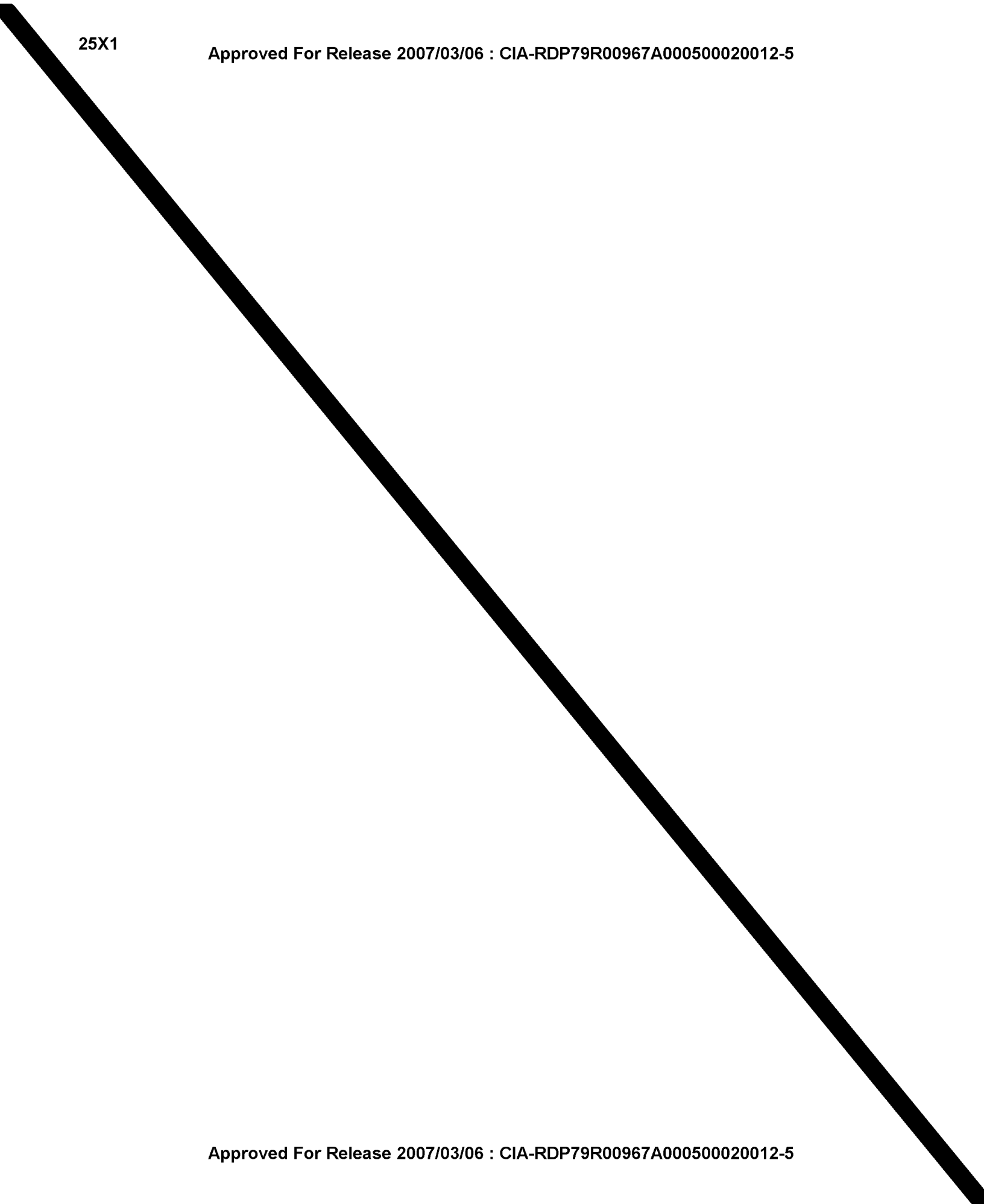

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